APPLICATION FOR
UNITED STATES PATENT

in the name of

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of

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for

Spoked Compact Disk Holder

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Spoked Compact Disk Holder

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims priority from U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/236,354 titled "WAGON WHEEL CD MAILER PACKAGE" and filed on September 29, 2000, and U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/236,350, titled "PACKAGING FOR CD MAILER" and filed on September 29, 2000, which are incorporated by reference herein in their entirety, and U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/750,028, titled "COMPACT DISK CASE" and filed on December 29, 2000.

TECHNICAL FIELD

This invention generally relates to compact disk (CD) cases.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

CD packaging materials are often used for CD storage, marketing, and distribution. For instance, when used for CD distribution, lightweight packaging materials, such as paperboard, may be sandwiched over the CD, with shrink-wrap cellophane covering the CD and paperboard. Plastic, which is more impact and wear resistant and may have more aesthetic appeal than paperboard, also may be used to fabricate CD cases and holders.

SUMMARY

In one general aspect, a CD holder includes a disk securing member structured to engage a CD, a base, and at least one spoke extending radially from the disk securing member toward the base. Implementation may include one or more of the following features. For example, at least one spoke extends radially from the disk securing member toward the base, the spoke(s) being discontinuous around a perimeter of the disk securing member. The spoke(s) may have wedge shaped cut-out areas that are defined, for example, between adjacent spoke sides. In one implementation, a disk protecting member may be positioned around a perimeter of a CD engaged by the disk securing member.

In another general aspect, a CD holder includes a first side and a second side that are moveable between open and closed positions. A disk securing member may be structured to engage a CD and having at least one spoke extending radially from the disk securing member toward the second side, the spoke(s) being discontinuous around a perimeter of the disk securing member.

Implementation may include one or more of the following features. For example, the spoke(s) may be structured to expose a portion of a CD that is engaged by the disk securing member when viewing the CD holder from a position that faces the side from which the disk securing member extends. Wedge shaped cut-out areas may be defined between adjacent spokes, enabling perception of the CD and cavity. The cut-out areas may be empty, may be holes on less than all of the side, or they may be filled with a transparent or translucent material. Furthermore, a transparent or translucent material may cover the second side, enabling perception of the cavity when the CD holder is in the closed position. In a further implementation, a transparent viewing window may be defined by a hole on a selected portion of the first side to enable a viewing characteristic that differs from the viewing characteristic that is provided through another portion of the first side. Such a viewing window also may be present on the second side.

The disk securing member generally includes a central portion that engages a CD through movement toward the second side and may be structured to separate a flat surface of the CD from the substantially flat surfaces of the sides. As such, a CD may be installed between the first and second sides, which may form a cavity in the closed position. The disk securing member may be positioned on an inner surface member of the side. Also, a disk protecting member may be positioned around a perimeter of the CD.

The CD may have a format that differs from a format of a digital versatile disk (DVD). For instance, the dimensions of the CD holder may be greater than the dimensions of a Jewel case typically used to store compact disks. The CD may store electronic marketing materials such as computer software for installing an Internet service provider on a personal computer.

In another general aspect, marketing materials may be distributed to an intended recipient by, for example, obtaining a CD on which marketing materials are stored as data,

installing the CD into the CD holder, and delivering the CD holder containing the CD to the intended recipient.

Implementation may include one or more of the following features. For example, the CD holder containing the CD may be delivered by affixing a dual sided label with opposing front and back faces to the first side such that the label covers at least a portion of the viewing window. The label may include information printed both on the front that is viewable while the holder is in the closed position and the back that is viewable only while the holder is in an open position. The front of the label may also contain information identifying an intended recipient and the back of the label may contain password information, marketing information or other information relating the intended recipient to a marketing source. Postage may be affixed to the CD holder or to a wrapper around the CD holder.

A locking mechanism may be used to secure the first side and the second side in a closed position during mailing of the CD holder.

Recipients of CDs containing marketing materials may have a higher rate of response when the packaging has aesthetic appeal and when recipients are able to view the CD through cut-out areas or viewing windows prior to opening the packaging. Moreover, cut-out areas and viewing windows that are holes in the sides of the CD holder may reduce the weight of the packaging and thus also reduce the cost of postage and shipping.

These features may be implemented using, for example, a method or a process, a device, an apparatus or a system, or software stored on a computer medium. The details of one or more implementations of the CD case and method of CD distribution are set forth in the accompanying drawings and the description below. Other features and advantages will be apparent from the description and drawings, and from the claims.

DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Figs. 1 – 3 are diagrams illustrating perspective views of a CD holder.

Fig. 4 is a block diagram showing a CD holder used for distributing marketing materials.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Referring to Fig. 1, a CD holder 100 for holding a CD generally includes a base 120, one or more spokes 130 and a disk securing member 150.

The CD may be formatted as a DVD but is generally formatted according to a non-DVD format. Marketing materials may be printed on the surfaces of the CD and/or stored on the CD as digital data. For instance, when distributed by Internet service providers (ISPs), the marketing materials stored on the CD typically include client installation programs designed to automatically configure or reconfigure a computer system to access a specified ISP. A recipient may use the CD to install the client or other software on its computer, enabling access to the host machines of a designated ISP or access to the other software. The marketing materials may also be designed for different purposes and may include additional or alternative software programs and data to achieve those purposes. For example, the CD 110 may include entertainment software programs such as games, video, music, or multi-media.

The base 120 may have a square or rectangular shape and may nearly approximate the size of a CD, generally exceeding the size of the CD. In other implementations, the base 120 may have another geometric shape, such as, for example, a circle, triangle or octagon.

The spokes 130 are radially projecting members extending from the disk securing member 150 to the base 120 and are discontinuous around a perimeter of the CD. The spokes 130 may be connected to the base 120 or disk securing member 150 by one or more connecting flanges. However, for purposes of this description, the spokes 130 are defined not to include such connecting flanges. In the implementation shown, six spokes 130 are positioned in a circular pattern around the perimeter of the base 120. In other implementations, the spokes 130 may consist of a lesser or greater number and may be arranged in other patterns. For instance, the spokes 130 may extend from the disk securing member 150 directly to the base 120 or may extend to a side or some intermediate member (not shown) that is connected to the base 120.

A space is formed adjacent to a single spoke or between the adjacent spokes. The space may constitute a hole in the base 120, and may be die cut, molded, or otherwise

formed. The space may appear as wedge shaped transparent cut-out areas 160 between the adjacent spokes 130, outlining the perimeter of the CD. In other implementations, the cut-out areas 160 may have circular, rectangular or other shapes. In some instances, the cut-out areas 160 may not be transparent, but instead may be generally translucent. As shown in Fig. 1, the wedge shape cut-out areas may be of equal area and spaced symmetrically such that the spokes 130 appear as spokes on a wheel. In another implementation, the cut-out area and spoke(s) may be arranged to give the appearance that an installed CD is floating in space.

A transparent material may cover the base 120 on the side of the base 120 opposing the disk securing member 150, enabling perception of a CD engaged by the disk securing member 150 while viewing the CD holder 100 from the opposing side of the base 120.

Referring to Fig. 2, a CD holder 200 may include a first side 220, a second side 220, a connecting section or seam 240, one or more spokes 130, a disk securing mechanism 150, one or more viewing windows 260 and one or more engageable locking mechanisms 270.

In general, the holder 200 has an outer shell defined, in part, by the first side 220 and the second side 230. Each side 220, 230 is capable of moving relative to the other side between open and closed positions. Fig. 2 illustrates an open position. When in the closed position, the holder 200 may form a cavity between the first side 220 and the second side 230 within which the CD may be placed. Movement between the open and closed position may be achieved by rotation about a hinge, for example, at seam 240. Such movement may be otherwise achieved, for example, by separating the first side 220 and the second side 230 using clasps (not shown). The first side 220 and the second side 230 generally have relatively flat surfaces, but may be otherwise configured.

A disk securing member 150 may be located within the cavity formed by the first side 220 and the second side 230. A portion of the disk securing member 150 may extend from the second side 230 to engage a center hole portion of the CD that may be placed in the cavity of the holder 200. Thus, the CD may remain fixed within the cavity such that the flat surface of the CD remains separated from the flat surface of the first side 220 and the second side 230. The disk securing member 150 may be positioned on an inner surface of the second side 230, or the disk securing member 150 also may be positioned on another layer

(not shown) that is separated but substantially parallel to the second side 230. The disk securing member 150 may be engaged or disengaged using one or more buttons.

As described above with respect to Fig. 1, spokes 130 may connect the disk securing member 150 to the second side 230. The spaces formed between the adjacent spokes 130 may appear as wedge shaped transparent cut-out areas 160 outlining the perimeter of the CD when viewed from a position facing the second side 230.

A hole may define a viewing window 260 on the first side 220 and/or the second side 230 (not shown). For example, the viewing window 260 may include approximately twenty percent (20 %) of the area of the first side 220. The viewing window 260 may be die cut, molded or otherwise formed. The viewing window 260 may include several viewing windows. The viewing window 260 is typically rectangular and may be positioned in a lower portion of the first side 220. In other implementations, the viewing window 260 has another shape, such as, for example, a circle, octagon or triangle. The viewing window 260 may be positioned on an upper portion of the first side 220. Another viewing window 260 may be present on the second side 230. Since the viewing window 260 may be a hole covered by transparent material, the viewing window 260 may enable perception of the cavity. When the CD is enclosed inside the case, the viewing window 260 may also allow perception of the CD.

An engageable locking mechanism 270 located on side portions of the first side 220 and the second side 230 may be capable of securing the first side 220 and the second side 220. For example, the locking mechanism may secure the first side 220 and the second side 230 during delivery of the holder by mailing or when otherwise desired, in a closed position around the CD.

The components of the CD holders 100, 200 shown in Figs. 1-2 such as the disk securing member 150, the first side 220, and the second side 230 are generally made of materials that render them rigid enough to protect the CD, yet durable enough to avoid permanent disfiguration if deformed, for example, during mailing or distribution. For example, the CD holders 100, 200 may be made of nylon or plastic. One or more of these components may also be made of other materials suitable for delivery, for example, by mail. For instance, the first side 220 and the second side 230 may be made of layered materials

such as cellophane, paperboard and plastic. In one implementation, a cover may be provided over the first side 220 and the second side 230, fitted to allow marketing information or other printed material to be inserted between the first side 220 or the second side 230 and the cover. The cover may be made of clear vinyl or plastic. The inserted material may also include a window that corresponds to the viewing window 260 on the first side 220, or inserted material may be positioned above, below, beside, on the opposite side or otherwise positioned to avoid obstruction of the viewing window 260.

The CD holder 100 or any portion of the CD holder 100 may contain a texture of any kind either molded into the material or applied using an additional material. In one implementation, the outside surfaces of the CD holder 100 have a smooth texture. In other implementations, the CD holder 100 may have varying types of surface textures. For example, the surface of the CD holder 100 may have fur or fur-like material applied to the surface. The CD holder 100 or any portion thereof may contain a raised, bumpy, bubbly, dotted or cushioned texture. The raised surfaces may be used for embossed lettering. The bumps or raised dots may be for aesthetic appeal, grasping, or opening and closing of the CD holder 100. The raised dots also may form patterns of Braille letters and characters. The cushioned texture may be effected by applying a resilient surface material with sealed or embedded air pockets. In another implementation, the outside surfaces of the CD holder 100 may have a metallic texture (e.g., platinum or tin colored). Furthermore, all or selected portions of the CD package may be clear or colored (e.g., clear or colored resins in mold), and may include one or more windows of any size or shape molded or die-cut from the case. These surfaces and textures may be achieved during the molding process or they may be achieved by affixing supplementary materials to a CD package.

The width, height and depth of the holder 200 may or may not be greater than a width, height and depth of a Jewel case typically used to store CDs having a non-DVD format. Where these dimensions are increased, separation between the flat surface of the CD and the substantially flat surfaces of the first side 220 and the second side 230 may be increased, even when the first side 220 and the second side 230 of the CD holder 200 are locked in the closed position. In general, the width, height and depth of the CD holder 200

measures approximately 13.5 cm x 19 cm x 1.5 cm, while the width, height, and depth of the Jewel case tends to measure approximately 12 cm x 14 cm x 1 cm.

The CD holder 200 may be used to mail CD-based marketing materials to an intended recipient. Referring to Fig. 3, to enable mailing, identification information and/or postage may be contained on a label 310 that is affixed to the holder 200, directly or indirectly. The identifying information may include address information, password, and other indicia and information, some of which may be used to identify the source of the recipient. For example, the identifying information may identify a specific direct mailing list from which the name of an intended recipient was obtained, or it may be used to pick a prospective customer to identifiable registration information or indicia (e.g., the recipient address, vehicle registration information, or registration information received through other means). The label 310 may be single sided or dual-sided and may cover at least a portion of the viewing window 260. When dual-sided and positioned over at least a portion of the viewing window 260, the information on both sides of the label may be perceived depending on whether the holder 200 is in the closed or an open position.

In other implementations, the identifying information and postage may be printed or hot-stamped directly on the holder 200. Also, the information and postage may be applied to a cover or wrapper, for example, cellophane, or a mailer, for example, paperboard, that is used to wrap the holder 200.

Referring to Fig. 4, a method for distributing marketing materials 400 generally includes obtaining a CD on which marketing materials are stored (step 410), installing the CD into a holder 200 (step 420), and mailing the holder containing the CD to an intended recipient (step 430).

Obtaining a CD (step 410) generally includes acquiring one or more CDs from wholesale suppliers, for example, in bulk supply. Step 410 may also include programming a CD with computer software. For instance, the computer software may include software capable of installing an ISP on a personal computer, but also or alternatively may include software for performing other functions. Additionally, obtaining a CD (step 410) may include obtaining CDs that include printed advertisements on one or both surfaces or printing or affixing such advertisements on the CD.

Installing the CD into a holder (step 420) may include installing the CD into any of several cases or holders, such as those described with respect to Figs. 1-3. For instance, the CD is generally installed into a holder having one or more spokes as described above with respect to Figs. 1 and 2. Installing the CD into the holder 200 (step 420) also may include securing the CD in the holder 200 using the disk securing member 150 by, for example, actuating the disk securing member 150 to engage the CD.

Mailing the CD holder 200 containing the CD to an intended recipient (step 430) generally includes applying postage and/or applying identifying information to the CD holder 200 directly or applying the postage and/or identifying information indirectly to the CD holder 200 using a label 310, cover, wrapper, or otherwise, as described above with respect to Fig. 3. If indirectly applied to a cover, such as, for example, cellophane, placed around or over some or all of the CD holder 200, mailing may include covering the holder 200 with the cover before mailing. If indirectly applied to a mailer, such as, for example, paperboard, mailing may include enclosing the CD holder 200 in a mailer to which postage and identifying information are applied.

The CD holder 100, 200 is generally useful as a storage medium for the CD upon receipt by the mailing recipient.

A number of implementations of a CD holder have been described. Nevertheless, it will be understood that various modifications may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the CD holder. For instance, although the CD holder has been described as a mailer, it may be used to enable other modes of CD delivery or may be used to enable CD warehousing and storage. Furthermore, the CD holder may be equipped with other functionality, e.g., a sound capability enabled through a sound chip. Accordingly, other implementations are within the scope of the following claims.